

I strongly support HB 5722 for two reasons:

Background... The current 3-inch law is 30 years old and dates back to a time when shellfish hatcheries did not exist, and the natural oyster population in Long Island Sound was trying to recover. The law was designed to protect natural beds from over-harvesting.

- 1) I am an oyster farmer in Eastern Connecticut. I buy all my oysters from a hatchery as seed at between 4 and 6 millimeters in size. At that size 8,000 animals fit in a Dixie cup. I consider them my personal property. The 2 ½ inch market size would allow me greater flexibility in the timing of growing versus selling my product. Depending on the weather, oysters can grow at different rates from year to year. And they take between 2 and 4 years to mature. The crop I purchase as tiny seed is the only crop I have. If I happen to get a couple of slower growing years, or if other factors result in smaller size, the majority of my crop may be under the current 3 inch minimum when their crop year comes up for harvest. An inability to legally sell them could put a possibly fatal financial burden on my operation.
- 2) Allowing containerized (hatchery) oysters to be sold at a smaller market size will naturally encourage growers to buy more seed from hatcheries. This will encourage increased hatchery production (a good thing) which will feed back into increased hatchery purchases. All this helps take pressure off natural populations. The more oysters you have the more spawning biomass you have the cleaner the water you have. All this is good for the environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

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